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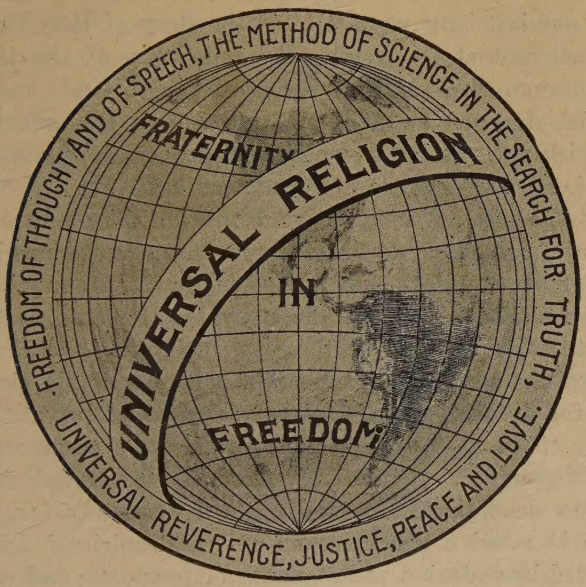
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND OF SPEECH, THE METHOD OF SCIENCE IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH,
FRATERNITY
UNIVERSAL RELIGION
IN
FREEDOM
UNIVERSAL REVERENCE, JUSTICE, PEACE AND LOVE.

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COMMENTS ON THE STORY OF A MEMORABLE PETITION.

In our last issue we published the story of Rev. Charles F. Dole's attempt at broadening the fellowship of the Unitarian denomination. Inasmuch as the *Christian Register* and *Pacific Unitarian* declined to make any allusion to this effort of the distinguished Unitarian preacher and author, maintaining their "historic silence" even as to his petition, signed though it was by nine of the most representative Unitarian clergymen, we felt it incumbent upon us not to leave our Unitarian friends ignorant of so significant a document and so suggestive a story. Accordingly we mailed a copy of the story to all whose names were known to us as interested in the cause of brotherhood in religion. We hope the story will receive the widest possible circulation simply for the sake of that religious ideal which lies at the heart of every effort to unite men in the bonds of a cosmopolitan religious fraternity. Since our enforced withdrawal from the Unitarian denomination we have stood resolutely for that expansion in religion which means universal spiritual fellowship, unfettered by sectarian names, claims, or purposes; and we firmly believe that the publication of this story of a memorable petition will serve as an effective instrument toward the realization of the religious ideal. The time must come when the denominational expansion desired by Mr. Dole and his distinguished co-signers of the petition will be fulfilled. Meanwhile it may be both interesting and helpful if we record the more significant of the comments that keep coming to us.

From one of the foremost spiritually-minded liberal lecturers of the country the following terse and searching comment has been received: "The situation is very curious, I can understand how the Unitarians, desiring to stand for the utmost freedom, would resent the implication that they do not and the

resentment of course helps to justify the implication. The petition must have been galling, but the action in reference to it could hardly have been worse."

Two Unitarian ministers who read the story together have sent word to this effect: The story is admirably told and the pathetic truth of our denominational narrowness made shockingly plain. We are glad the experiment was made, sorry it failed, but feel sure the next one will succeed.

The following extract from a letter, recently received, states the viewpoint of a young Unitarian minister settled over a New England church of the "left-wing" in the denomination:

"Most of my spare moments of late have been spent on the 'Memorable Petition.' I heartily agree with its purpose and with you, and still hope it may be granted in the very near future. The movement you represent has already achieved valuable results within the Unitarian body and it only remains to bring those to the surface. A fellowship of the kind asked for by the petition would greatly strengthen the free church movement, for it is certainly true that many who are nominally associated with the Unitarians are quite susceptible to its influence. Some way of coming into contact with Unitarians would soon infest the whole body.

"Cherishing the hope that a union may yet be effected I have read the committee's reply with the purpose of finding out just what were the reasons for their refusal. They explicitly affirm that they believe in the principle, and I think that thus they have admitted that the petition ought to be granted. For if one believes in a principle he will apply it wherever it is applicable. To refuse to do this would discredit the belief as insincere. There could be but one ground, then, for not granting the petitioners' prayer, and that would be that the specific concrete case did not come under the principle. But the committee does not even attempt to show that the Tacoma church does not come under the principle. This church seems to meet all the conditions of an independent church seeking free fellowship. I fail to see, then, how the committee's reply can be anything but an arbitrary dictum. So much I think can be truthfully said about the logic of the case.

"But I find some things in the committee's reply which, to say the least, does not harmonize with what one who sincerely believed in the principle would say. Such phrases as 'promise of valuable results,' 'actual affiliation,' 'affiliation in form,' and 'to avoid "entangling alliances" ' point, it seems to me, to the real reason for not granting the prayer. They show that after all the committee does not believe in fellowshipping independent churches, and that it looks with favor only on such alliances as do 'entangle.' The burden of the prayer, I take it, is that alliances *can* be formed which do *not* entangle. This is the principle which in one place the committee say they believe in, but which in another place they regard hostile to 'actual affiliation.'

"In legal matters such a report and finding as this could not stand and would justify a new trial It is both illogical and inconsistent.

"In a word, to say nothing of the conclusion of the committee as such, the thinking of the document is vulnerable at many points. The legal minds in the Tacoma and Seattle churches must be either amused or disgusted.

"One more remark about the petition and I drop it. I am very glad you regard the verdict as that of the committee alone. For still hoping in success one good reason is the loose and superficial character of the committee's reply. It certainly does not represent even the intellect of the Unitarian body. What a contrast to the clearness and consistency of the petition. But I mention another reason which you yourself, perhaps, have thought of. The last sentence in the National Conference preamble explicitly lays down the principle on which the petition itself rests. And I think we have a right to expect that the officers shall carry out this proviso of the denominational constitution. Not to do so would be to violate their oath of office.

"I speak from my own point of view and of others who, like myself, do not accept the creed, but are listed in the year book supposedly by virtue of the last sentence in the preamble. The present method of classifying ministers does misrepresent the man who disbelieves in the creed."

JESUS AND OTHER MASTERS CONTRASTED AND COMPARED.*

BY ALFRED W. MARTIN.

Akbar, the Mogul emperor of India, in the seventeenth century convened at his court Hindus, Moslems, Jews, Parsees, Christians, representatives of various religions, for a free discussion of their respective systems of faith. Out of this ferment of hospitality there was produced that remarkable work known as the *Dabistan*—an impartial report of the confession of faith of each of these representatives. One of the participants in this friendly conference it was who gave utterance to the familiar sentence that betokens the spirit of this famous convention, "If thou art a Mussulman go stay with the Franks, if thou art a Shuite, go mix with the Schismatics; if a Christian, fellowship with the Jews; whatever thy religion associate with men of opposite persuasion. If thou canst mix with them freely and art not angered at hearing their discourse, thou hast attained peace and art a veritable master of creation." The same thirst that possessed Akbar to go out of his own into a larger religious communion, to enter into the spirit and message of the great historical systems of faith, originated the Worlds Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 and many a lesser parliament since. The same passion it was that in 1867 brought into being the Free Religious Association of America and that ten years ago created our own movement for universal or non-sectarian religion. None other than the spirit which moved Akbar prompted the delivery of this series of discourses.

What is it that we have accomplished in this course? We have gone like pilgrims, in the name of universal brotherhood, in the interests of truth and in the spirit of love, with the staff of sincerity and the scrip of sympathy, to the shrines of sacred scripture that shrive the eternal gospel of the great religious teachers. What have been the main results of our pilgrimage? In the first place we must agree that it has broadened us, made us more catholic in our sympathies, more cosmopolitan in our attitude, more generous and responsive to revelations of inspir-

*Closing discourse of a series on "Great Religious Teachers," written after delivery at Tacoma and Seattle, Sunday, May 25th, 1902.

ing truth from non-Christian sources whence we fancied little or nothing of worth could come; it has developed within us that latest of the religious virtues, which is more than forbearance, or tolerance, or charity, and to which we give the name appreciation. For no one can study the life and work, the mission and the message of the great religious teachers without gaining a deeper desire and a more spontaneous readiness to recognize whatever of goodness and truth other masters besides Jesus have made known to mankind.

In the second place we have observed that all these great religious teachers, despite their differing doctrines, have to some extent, traveled the same road, faced the same way, propounded the same problems, cherished the same ideal, manifested the same consecration. The radical differences in their religious positions, we have seen, are largely the result of the age and place in which they were born and reared and the political and social conditions prevailing at the time.

Again, we have found that the moral precepts enjoining justice, gentleness, forgiveness, temperance, truthfulness and the rest, were common to all the different historical systems of religion and the selections from their gospels as read from week to week furnished incontestable proof of this similarity, albeit that there are certain moral maxims taught by one or another of these teachers which are not found in the ethical code of the others and also that there are modern moral maxims with no exact counterpart in any of the ancient codes.

We noted, too, that as with the moral so with the religious sentiments—reverence, awe, aspiration, worship and the rest—these also are common to all the various forms of faith as unfolded by their respective prophets. Nor is there any better evidence of this resemblance than the succession of prayers to which you have listened, each the outpouring of one or another of these great teachers and demonstrating their common possession of the religious sentiments. There is, then, a real universality of moral precepts and religious sentiments to which the scriptures of the great religions bear witness. The golden rule we once thought was original with Jesus, but we came upon it in the sayings of Confucius and of Gotama, in the hymns of

the Rishis of the Vedas, in the gospel of Zoroaster and Mohammed. Even Moses, when he taught "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," did not express the sentiment of revenge, as is popularly supposed, but rather that of justice, and justice is the heart of the golden rule. The ten commandments of the Old Testament, in slightly varying phrase, we found, have their parallel in the injunctions of many a non-Jewish teacher. Nay, more, in this Hebrew decalogue we miss certain commandments of Buddhistic, Hindu and Mohammedan origin without which the moral needs of our age cannot be met. We listened to a Hindu chant and were instantly reminded of a familiar Hebrew psalm. We heard a mystic hymn of the Brahmin and long before the last verse was reached we felt ourselves in accord with its sentiment and thought. How slight a change in the prayers of the prophet of Persia would suit them to our scientific theism! Gotama teaches "the noble four-fold path" to salvation, and though we be not Buddhists we realize that we also must walk this path else the salvation which is character cannot be ours. We open the "Analects" of Confucius, the "Kings" of an earlier age in China, the "Koran" of Mohammed and in each we find the credentials of a religion that speaks to us in accents transcendently fine, so that it becomes impossible for us to describe the Old and New Testaments as "sacred" and all the other scriptures "profane." Equally impossible is it for us to adhere to that old-time classification, born of unfamiliarity with the content of the non-Christian religions, according to which Christianity is placed by itself as "the one true and only revealed religion," while all the other religions are labeled "natural and false." As a result of our weekly investigations we have learned that in all religions some portions of the infinite truth may be discovered, some unmistakable signs of their common natural expression of the soul of man seeking at-one-ment with the divine. No one religion, we are persuaded, has a monopoly of ethical or religious truth, none has an exclusive revelation, none is warranted in making for itself a special unique claim, none is justified in feeling contempt for all the rest, but, as Richter once advised, "Each should welcome all the others as lovingly as different languages in which one spirit of humanity is expressed."

Whosoever acts upon that beautiful advice will approach with the utmost caution and care the difficult and delicate task of comparing and contrasting Jesus with other Masters. That task has been attempted many times and in the main by Christians, but I doubt if there exists anywhere a genuine Christian scholar who can make a just and accurate estimate of Jesus from the standpoint of comparison and contrast with the other great religious teachers. The very fact that he is a Christian pledges him in advance to render a certain verdict, forecloses the possibility of impartial judgment, forbids his sitting as a juror in the case, for he has already given in his decision. The same would be true of the Hindu, the Buddhist, or the devotee of any other of the historical religions. He, too, because of his confessed allegiance to it, becomes thereby disqualified to express an unbiased opinion.

The venerable lamented Rabbi Isaac Wise thought *Moses* the greatest of all the world's prophets. Dharmapala, the ardent apostle of Buddhism, declared in my hearing that *Gotama Buddha,* when properly understood, would be appreciated as the foremost of the world's religious teachers. The late Mr. J. D. Cola, of Bombay, an accomplished expositor of Parsism, was persuaded that *Zoroaster* was endowed with all that was needed to satisfy the ethical and spiritual wants of man. There is not a consecrated Christian anywhere but believes with John Henry Barrows that universal acceptance of *Jesus, the Christ,* as the sole savior of the race, will be the crowning triumph and glory of religion's evolution. These typical affirmations of distinguished representatives of various faiths provoke a smile, illustrating the oft-proved truth that every disciple is partial to his own master. But partiality is just as fatal to justice as prejudice. Renan once said that to be a judge of religious systems one must first have been a disciple within and then a critic without. Certainly freedom from discipleship to any one of the great historical teachers must be set down as a *conditio sine qua non* of all just comparison. The familiar fable of Aesop admirably illustrates this truth. A lion and a forester were discussing the question who is the stronger, a lion or a man. The woodsman having rather the worst of the argument led his

staunch opponent to a piece of statuary representing a man bending over a prostrate lion. "Ah, yes;" said the grim monarch of the forest, "but their positions would have been reversed had a lion been the sculptor." Similarly it may be said that the inaccuracy and unfairness of many of the comparisons established between Jesus and other masters must be attributed to the fact that Christians have been the sculptors. But let not him who is not a Christian nor him who confesses allegiance to none of the world's great religious teachers imagine that because of his non-sectarianism the accepted task of comparison and contrast will be therefore easy of fulfillment. Let him turn his telescope to the firmament where shines the constellation of the master-spirits of religion, let him carefully wipe the dust of tradition and authority from the lenses, conscientiously clear his brain of whatever cobwebs of prejudice or partiality may lurk in its recesses and he will find that despite all these preparations his astronomical apparatus is inadequate and imperfect, that the basis of comparison constantly shifts, that each of these great luminaries is a star of the first magnitude in some one respect, each was a specialist in some one branch of moral or religious work, each stood for a particular reform and headed a new party, each represented and led a reaction against current beliefs and practices; Moses, for instance, against slavery and foreign idolatry, Mohammed against polytheism, the Buddha against religiosity, Jesus against state subordination of the individual. Each of these leaders, moreover, was the product, in some measure, of his own age and environment and what he would have been elsewhere under different conditions remains an open question and to be remembered when making comparisons and contrasts. To how great an extent, for example, was the career and work of Jesus determined by his Hebrew ancestry, his Palestinian birth and education, the political and economic tyrrany of Rome, hated in the province of Judea more keenly, perhaps, than elsewhere in the empire, the conception of the kingdom of heaven and its bearing upon the welfare of each individual whose significance was heavily discounted by the Roman theory of the state. So also in the case of each of the other great masters, a corresponding group of facts might be cited to

show how these helped to determine the particular bent of his life and work, all of which should be borne in mind when venturing upon an estimate of his merits and demerits as compared with those of others.

To institute an exhaustive series of comparisons and contrasts is obviously impossible within the limits of a single discourse. The most I can hope to do is to present some of the more striking instances of resemblance and difference and let them suffice to teach the lesson intended.

Of the great religious teachers whose life and work we have considered in this course there is one with whom Jesus cannot be compared. So very meagre are the details that have come down to us concerning Zoroaster that all attempts at comparison must fail. Of his personality we know almost nothing, only his teaching remains and from a study of this we learn that like Jesus he laid the emphasis in his preaching on character as the all-important possession of the soul. On the other hand, unlike Jesus, he taught a seemingly complicated and detailed system of ceremonialism. But while Jesus endorsed the ceremony of fasting, Zoroaster opposed it, on the ground that it impaired a man's power to work, and work, in the gospel of Zoroaster, occupies the chief place because the most effective antidote to the influence of Ahriman, the Zoroastrian Satan. Jesus anticipated the ultimate destruction of Satan, Zoraster looked forward to his ultimate conversion, even he, no less than all the other evil spirits, Zoroaster held, eventually would be won over to the kingdom of Ahura Mazda, the beneficient sovereign of the world.

It is with Gotama, the Buddha, that Jesus the Christ has been compared more than with any other of the great religious teachers, probably because of the number of striking parallels in the circumstances of their life and work. But just as a church is beautified yet half hidden by ivy, clinging vines and climbing roses, so the personality of Gotama and Jesus has been overgrown with the vines of myth and the roses of miracle making a comparison of their personalities exceedingly precarious. In both the supreme graces of self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice were manifest, and perhaps the sacrifice of the Buddha appeals to us more than that of the Christ, because Gotama gave up a

palace, a throne and a prince's life to dedicate himself to the poorest and lowest, and that in a country where social distinctions and caste were developed to such a degree that the highest were higher and the lowest lower than in any other land. Gotama, moreover, preferred to and did postpone entering the Buddhistic heaven, though fully fitted to dwell there, in order that he might continue the work of saving souls here on earth. Both Jesus and Gotama looked on this world as evil, on the physical and æsthetic life as hindering, not helping, the soul, and on intellectual pursuits as unworthy ends of life. Both laid special stress on self-abnegation, disregard of this world's interests and an all absorbing interest in other—worldliness. Neither grasped the conception of self-realization, the full-rounded development of all the various sides of life as the summum bonum. Hence the striking similarities in the ethical precepts of the Pitakas and the New Testament. Yet the differences are equally striking and emphasis should be placed upon them because of two widely current erroneous notions. One is that Jesus' youth was spent in India learning Buddhism and the other that Jesus was a reincarnation of Buddha. The radical differences in their ethical doctrines conclusively demonstrates the fallacy of these assertions. Jesus, we are told, promised to take upon his shoulders the sins of all the world. Gotama made no such promise, but on the contrary held that each soul must bear his own sins. "No one can purify another, only by oneself is one purified." So reads the explicit statement in the Dhammapada, which in a certain sense is the Buddhistic Sermon on the Mount. Again, Jesus held out the hope of future life in the kingdom of heaven, which he believed would be established in his own generation, Gotama anticipated nothing but the "cessation of rebirths," possible to all in whom "desire" has become extinct. The Buddha taught a religion of compassion, the Christ a religion of love. The former advocated self-seclusion from the world, the latter held that one must be in, yet not of the world. Gotama emphasized the facts of evil and sorrow and inculcated annihilation of the nature that is subject to evil and sorrow. Jesus recognized the facts of evil and sorrow, but taught that man is a child of God and therefore is empowered to conquer evil and sorrow by ris-

ing above them. The Buddha claimed that life ought to be destroyed because it is bad, the Christ believed it should be purified till it is good. The goal of Gotama was Nirvana, the annihilation of the nature that desires; to Jesus, membership in the miraculously established kingdom of God on earth was the supreme end of life.

A comparison of Jesus with Confucius cannot be carried very far before it takes the form of contrast. It is the contrast between two musicians, one of whom scrupulously observes all the rules of harmony and counterpoint, rendering his composition with mathematical exactness and precision; the other, endowed with an ear susceptible to the most delicate musical influences improvises and executes in a few moments what the master of musical rules achieves only after prolonged and diligent practice. Confucius gives us a precise and definite score of duty to be assiduously studied and practiced; Jesus gives us an ear for moral and spiritual harmonies, enabling us to choose the particular notes of conduct as experience shall require. The one prescribes a course of moral drilling, the other impregnates the soul with the spirit of love letting it dictate the special forms that duty shall assume. Confucius was dominated by an allegiance to the past and an almost slavish regard for ancestral authority and custom. In the sayings of Jesus we detect a ring of independence of the past, a defiance of persons in authority, even of parents, for as a boy he deliberately disregarded the advice of his parents, asserted his own original insight and acted on his own instinct.

Socrates and Jesus stand in still more striking antithesis. Each had superiority in his own sphere. Socrates represented the morality of the brain, Jesus the morality of the heart. Each occupied only a partial position, falling short of the modern ideal which is a combination of both. As Socrates was strong in the intellectual qualities but somewhat lacking in tenderness and humility, depth of sentiment and imagination, so Jesus was strong in these emotional qualities but weak in the intellectual. One had too little of the feminine in his make-up, the other too much. Socrates stood for free mental development, Jesus for a culture of the heart, and it is the union of these without the

sacrifice of either to the other that constitutes the ideal culture to which man should aspire, for, when backed by the good will, it culminates in the noblest possible life.

There is a certain refrain that one meets with again and again in the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius. Look within, within is a divine element which if cultivated and appealed to brings consolation and peace. That refrain has its counterpart in the New Testament and serves as a link to connect Moses and Jesus. Radical as is the difference in their outlook on life and their attitude to its vicissitudes and trials, far apart as are their ideals of life, these two master-spirits come together here. For the grandest thought that Jesus brought to his contemporaries and posterity was this—"the kingdom of heaven is within you." While the emperor on the greatest throne of history was expressing the deepest thought he could fall back upon, the followers of the humble carpenter in the catacombs where their Christian dead were laid away were whispering to themselves a corresponding thought. In this their common reliance on interior and indestructible sources of strength and peace we have a bond of union that unites in one spiritual fellowship the carpenter of Nazareth and the emperor of Rome.

What, now, is the chief lesson of all such comparisons and contrasts as these I have drawn?

The *resemblances* between the personality and teachings of Jesus and those of other masters exalt our conception of human nature and its possibilities. These resemblances do not frighten, they delight us. A truth is not less true because it was believed by the great mass of humanity outside of Palestine. The more ancient a truth the more venerable and impressive it becomes.

> "It does not lessen what he taught,
> Nor make the lesson Jesus brought
> Less precious, that his lips retold
> Some portion of that truth of old,
> Confirming with his own impress
> The common law of righteousness."

The *differences* between Jesus and other masters bring home to us the grand and glorious thought that from each we have something to learn, that each may be to us a special help and inspiration because of the emphasis he placed on what others light-

ly touched or wholly ignored. There are times in the experience of us all when we need just the particular word of one or another of the great masters, just the special help which he brings. When, for example, lack of poise and self-control is our despair we cannot do better than turn to Marcus Aurelius or to Epictetus, the slave philosopher, in whom the emperor recognized an inspirer of the soul. When we are inclined to compromise ignobly, to commit the sin of intellectual dishonesty and stain the soul with insincerity, it is Socrates who shall strengthen us with his own loyalty and courage. When selfishness claims us and we shrink from making sacrifices for the sake of a good cause, the "great renunciation" of the Buddha will be our liberator. When we grow doubtful and despondent about the future of humanity and wonder whether it is worth while to be upright and virtuous ourselves and take a hand in the reforms that need workers, then Moses may be our savior from pessimism and despair, as we turn to the wonderful story of the triumph of justice and the right in the wilderness of Sinai, thirty-two centuries ago. When we are preoccupied with and absorbed in selfish interests and pleasures or "pepper-corn" aims and life loses its dignity and value then Jesus will be our redeemer from degradation, he having dedicated his life to the grandest of all aims, the effort to conform his life to the supreme standards of justice and love, thus contributing to an ideal order of society.

I beseech you, friends, not to let this series of discourses on the master-spirits of religious history be remembered by you as sources of entertainment or merely of instruction. It harrows my soul when one comes to me and says, "I have been greatly entertained," or "that was a great intellectual treat." For I have not spoken of these beacon lights of humanity in the interests of amusement, nor even of education alone, but rather of duty and brotherhood and the upbuilding of character. Let, then, the respective gospels of these great teachers do for us all their beneficent work and under the inspiration of their appeal for noble living we shall go on from strength to strength, from glory to glory exclaiming with Shakspere's enchanted Miranda,

"O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O beautiful world that has such people in it."